

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-30

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5805

INFO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

S E C R E T CAIRO 1425

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS

TAGS: OCLR EG VS

SUBJECT: GOE REQUEST FOR HELP IN OVERFLIGHT OF SOUTH VIETNAM

REF: CAIRO 810 AND PREVIOUS

1. THIS MORNING FOREIGN MINISTER FAHMY RAISED WITH ME EGYPTAIR'S DESIRE OBTAIN OVERFLIGHT CLEARANCE FOR SOUTH VIETNAM ON ITS FLIGHTS TO JAPAN AND HONG KONG. AS DEPARTMENT AWARE, UNDERSECRETARY MOHAMED RIAD HAD EARLIER DONE SO IN THE MINISTER'S ABSENCE.

2. FAHMY INDICATED THAT EGYPTAIR FLIGHTS, WHICH HAD BEEN TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED, HAVE RECENTLY BEEN RESUMED, OVERFLYING NORTH VIETNAMESE TERRITORY. THIS, HOWEVER, IS ENORMOUSLY EXPENSIVE AND FAR EAST FLIGHTS WILL HAVE TO BE DROPPED IF RELIEF CANNOT BE OBTAINED. HE ASKED THAT USG STRONGLY URGE GVN TO AGREE.

3. I RECALLED PERTINENT EXCHANGES WITH UNDERSECRETARY MOHAMED RIAD ON THE SUBJECT AND ASKED IF GHORBAL HAD MET WITH BUI DIEM IN WASHINGTON. FAHMY HAD APPARENTLY FORGOTTEN THAT, WHEN IN WASHINGTON, HE HAD INSTRUCTED RIAD TO INFORM US GHORBAL AND BUI DIEM SHOULD CONDUCT EXPLORATORY TALKS IN WASHINGTON. (IF GHORBAL WAS INFORMED, HE HAS APPARENTLY NOT HAD ANY SUCH TALKS.)

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4. I SAID I APPRECIATED EGYPTAIR'S DESIRE, BUT USG

IS NOT IN A POSITION PRESSURE RVN ON MATTERS WHICH AFFECT ITS SOVEREIGNTY. IN AN EFFORT TO BE HELPFUL, AMBASSADOR MARTIN HAD PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED MATTER WITH RVN FOREIGN MINISTER, BUT GVN UNDERSTANDABLE EXPECTS SOMETHING IN RETURN. FAHMY WOULD CERTAINLY APPRECIATE CURIOUS NATURE OF A REQUEST THAT GVN EXTEND SPECIAL PRIVILEGES TO A GOVERNMENT WHICH AS AN ACCREDITED REPRESENTATIVE OF PRG WHOSE AVOWED AIM IS TO OVERTHROW THE VERY AUTHORITIES WHO ARE NOT BEING ASKED FOR THIS FAVOR. HAD THE TIME NOT COME TO GET RID OF PRG REPRESENTATION HERE, WHICH IS DEMONSTRABLY UNABLE TO HELP GOE IN MEETING ITS OVERFLIGHT OR ANY OTHER REQUIREMENTS?

5. SPEAKING PERSONALLY, FAHMY SAID GOE IS NOT AT THIS TIME ABLE TO DO SO. IT HAS ALREADY MOVED VERY FAST WITH USG AND HAS INCURRED MUCH CRITICISM FROM USSR, EAST EUROPEANS AND RADICAL ARABS AND AFRICANS FOR ITS PAINS. THUS FAR, TOO, FAHMY CONTENDED PARENTHETICALLY, GOE HAS HAD LITTLE TANGIBLE RETURN FROM USG THAT IT CAN POINT TO TO PARRY ITS CRITICS. TO GET RID OF PRG NOW WOULD SIMPLY ESCALATE CRITICISM. THINGS WILL HAVE TO BE DONE ONE STEP AT A TIME.

6. THE MINISTER SUGGESTED WE ASK RVN TO CONSIDER EGYPTAIR'S REQUEST AS A SIMPLE COMMERCIAL TRANSACTION. RVN SHOULD NOT INSIST AT THIS TIME ON POLITICAL QUID PRO QUOS. IF SUCH OVERFLIGHT CAN BE OBTAINED, AS FAHMY PUT IT, "WE CAN MOVE AHEAD LITTLE BY LITTLE." HE STRESSED THAT HIS COMMENTS SHOULD BE HANDLED WITH UTMOST DISCRETION.

7. I AGREED REPORT HIS REQUEST, BUT CAUTIONED I COULD GIVE HIM NO ASSURANCE WHAT RVN RECEPTIVITY MIGHT BE. EILTS

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NNN

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